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ABSTRACT

This paper surveys the study of English in British schools from the 16th century to the present. The paper proceeds chronologically, using key terms operative in education at various times to structure discussion. In the 16th century a key term was "rhetoric," which concerns oral expression. "The Art and Craft of Rhetoric," is one of the oldest surviving textbooks, discussing, types of discourse--logical, demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial. By 1700, a key term was "expression"--verse writing in English was encouraged as a skill approved at the highest social levels; imitation and the use of stock expression was the dominant convention. By the middle of the 18th century, literature anthologies were common, as were spelling books and grammar textbooks, but from the middle of the 17th century to the middle of the 18th century it is hard to know how much attention was given to written expression, since no textbooks survive. During that same period, however, social and economic developments caused particular attention to be paid to oral expression, especially for those upwardly bound socially. In the 19th century, educators were asking their students to read and explain particular literature selections and grammar continued to be taught through this century and writing remained unpopular with students. History suggests that English has developed as an alliance of components. Includes 22 notes. (TB)

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CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

OCCASIONAL PAPERS, 23

ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT: ITS DEVELOPMENT OVER FOUR CENTURIES

TEXT OF A TALK TO THE CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION
11 MAY 1994

IAN MICHAEL

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English as a subject: its development over four centuries

Subjects do not exist in nature; they are man-made and reflect changing interests in different aspects of experience, all of which are interrelated. In intellectual enquiry the seamless robe of knowledge is a better model than the school timetable.For example, subjects on which textbooks have been written but are not at the moment on the timetable:

T.D.Humphreys *A complete treatise of trowsers cutting, illustrated with anatomical figures and mathematical diagrams.* Glasgow 1860.

Isa Tweed *Cow-keeping in India. A simple and practical book on their care and treatment, their various breeds and the means of rendering them profitable.* Calcutta 1891.

The names of subjects and the content of subjects develop separately. The name *grammar* has been constant for centuries, but its content has varied, sometimes including literature, sometimes not; sometimes *grammar* has meant only parts of speech, excluding syntax; it has included word history and the history of the language, figures of speech, stylistics, the origin and development of language. *Elocution*, which used to appear on school timetables, is no longer the name of a current subject, although teachers still concern themselves with pupils' ability to express themselves orally.

English as a subject English is obviously and notoriously a subject difficult to pin down, even in a purely contemporary context. Is drama part of English ? Of course it must be:you cannot study Shakespeare without acting him. Of course it isnt: you dont need a degree in English in order to design the set or plan the lighting.

Looked at historically English is even more difficult to pin down. In fact you merely frustrate yourself if you expect the single name <u>English</u> to correspond with a single, stable branch of knowledge and skill. Even now many universities do not know how to combine English literature and English language.

Constants The historian therefore needs some constants to which the comings and goings within the subject can be related. Such constants are, necessarily, platitudinous: the skill of putting into words what you want to say or write (*expression*) and the skill of understanding what other people say or write (*interpretation*). *Interpretation* is a better term than *understanding*. The latter focuses attention on intellectual processes and tends to undervalue the aesthetic aspects of a response. By letting in the aesthetic *interpretation* opens the door to a subsidiary type of response, the critical.

Common to both expression and interpretation is the idea of *control*. When you are expressing yourself, orally or on paper, you correct, revise, recast what you are saying. When you interpret you are similarly scrutinising structure, how things are related to each other --- logically, tonally, by association. Historically the instruments of control, both expressive and interpretative, have been logic and grammar.

Scamper I shall now scamper through four centuries. Such a scamper is so absurd that I shall not spend time defending it. It does mean, however, that I have to keep to the main lines of growth and omit a number of innovative, imaginative and interestingly cranky reformers. To have done each innovator justice would have taken all our time, and I should still have had to describe the main line of growth in order to show what was innovative. I shall take first the period up to 1700, then each of the two following centuries. I shall spend most time on the early period because it is little known.

To 1700, oral expression The year is 1532. The subject is rhetoric. The textbook, which it is reasonable to call the oldest textbook of English, is the second edition of Leonard Cox's *The art and craft of rhetoric* (1). The first edition survives in two copies, but is undated. Cox was master of the grammar school at Reading, a scholar who had taught at the university of Cracow and translated Erasmus. His rhetoric deals primarily with oral expression. It is a school book "for young beginners", designed for "all such as will either be advocates and proctors in the law or else apt to be sent in their prince's ambassades or to be teachers of God's word". More simply, it is also for "all them that have any thing to prepose or to speak afore any company what somever they be".

Cox discusses types of discourse (logical, demonstrative, deliberative and judicial) and the kind of structure appropriate to each. He does not deal with the figures of speech, gesture or memory, but he describes the relation between rhetoric and logic:

"The logician in disputing observeth certain rules for the setting of his words, being solicitous that there be spoken no more nor no less than the thing requireth" (An excellent precept)

"The rhetorician seeketh about and borroweth where he can...for to make the simple and plain logical arguments gay and delectable".

There is an ambiguity here which is of some historical importance. It sounds at first as though Cox is saying that the speaker, as rhetorician, adds ornament to the plain discourse which he had first drafted as a logician. This we would now consider, in writing or in architecture, to be bad practice. But Cox does not say that the rhetorician adds ornament to the logically expressed <u>discourse</u>, but to "simple, plain logical <u>arguments</u>". If he means exactly what he says, he is not just

applying decoration to a completed expression, but is allowing for the full integration, in the very conception of an expression, of its intellectual and aesthetic factors.

Expression, written By 1700 about twenty rhetorics, in English and intended for schools, had appeared. They were concerned primarily with oral expression. We know less about the teaching of written expression in English at this period. Pupils presumably drafted on paper what they proposed to declaim, always in imitation of some classical model; but it is likely that translation out of Latin or Greek was the most widely practised form of written expression. There is scattered evidence even in early sixteenth century Latin textbooks of the masters' care for the quality of the English which their pupils submitted as translation.

Verse writing in English was encouraged as a skill approved at the highest social levels, but even here imitation and the use of stock expressions was the dominant convention. We know, for example,that Caleb Vernon, who died in 1665 at the age of twelve and a half, had written at school "an English Pastoral Exercise on a solemn Subject".

Ludus Ludi Literarii One particularly interesting work shows the move away from the aristocratic type of classical rhetoric. In 1672 an anonymous teacher compiled : *Ludus ludi literarii, or schoolboys' exercises and divertisements. In xlvii speeches: some of them Latin, but most English; spoken (and prepared to be spoken) in a private school about London, at several breakings up, in the year 1671.* (2) The compiler claims that the book is the first collection of this kind ever to be made. Its purpose is to "inlarge and inrich the inventions of his young scholars, and put a sharp edge upon their fancies". Many of the topics, he says, are "as petite, and little, as can be thought of...*Upon a Mince-Pie...Upon a Quaker's wedding....Upon boys going to school, that are not intended for scholars*" The compiler defends "merry and light " things if they are not profane (an unusual attitude for a seventeenth century teacher). He also says that he would rather do other things than run a private school --- but "every man must comply with his Condition".

For most pupils, though (especially those outside the grammar schools) the commonest form of written expression would be the supposedly useful practice of letter writing.

Interpretation The interpretation of literature in English was taught, if at all, in the rhetorics through quotations illustrating figures of speech. Examples from, say, Sidney and Spenser, were scattered and scarce, invoked only when a figure could not easily be illustrated from Latin. The real forerunners of literary textbooks (so far as there are such things) were the commonplace book and the miscellany, each a kind of anthology.

The commonplace books go back to classical times. They are collections of sayings and short quotations, chosen for their moral and prudential force rather than for literary quality, sometimes with attributions real or fanciful. One of the earliest in English is Sir Thomas Elyot's *The bankette of sapience*, 1539 (3), in which a short entry under the heading *Peril* reads as follows:

There is nothing so sure, that it is out of danger, perchance of that thing which is of no puissance. (Q.Curtius)

If thou mayst not clearly escape out of peril, choose rather to die honestly than to live shamefully. (Socrates)

The miscellanies were adult collections of verse, such as Tottel's Miscellany of 1557. In between the commonplace books and the miscellanies was a popular type of collection which resembled the commonplace book in the brevity of its entries but, like the miscellany, drew on literary, rather than moralistic, sources. These collections, resembling a thematic dictionary of verse quotations, can for our present purposes be called "Treasuries".

By the middle of the seventeenth century there is evidence that these treasuries were used in school: In 1634 an edition of Francis Mere's *Wits Treasury*, 1598, (4) is "more particularly published for schools", and the 1636 edition is "chiefly for the benefit of schools". Similarly Nicholas Ling's *Wits Commonwealth*, 1597, (5) has editions " for schools" in 1699, 1707 and 1722.

Some entries at least must have caught the attention of schoolboys. *Wits Treasury*, under the heading "Scholars", reads:

" As many women do not conceive by some men, but being joined to others become fruitful: so there be some, that with some masters are indocible, but do profit with other teachers; because as between bodies, so between wits, there is a sympathy, and an antipathy."

Wits Treasury contains passages from the novels of Lyly, Greene and William Warner; from Puttenham and Ascham. Although we know only that the publishers hoped to sell the books to schools we must surely be seeing here the beginnings of some exposure of pupils to English literature. We need to know what form this exposure took -- through a library, leisure reading, Friday afternoons, classroom relaxation ?

Logic Both oral and written expression were to some extent influenced by logic, which was taught at the top of a few grammar schools. Logic was concerned with the structure of an argument, and was thus more closely related to the teaching of expression in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than it is today.

The first logic in English was Thomas Wilson's *The rule of reason*, 1551, (6) but logic did not regularly influence English

teaching. Grammar was thought to provide a sufficient framework for the teaching of linguistic control.

Grammar -- the skill of getting the words into the right shape and the right groups -- lay behind the skills of expression and interpretation. In the grammar school grammar was Latin grammar, and the first grammar of English, William Bullokar's *Pamphlet for grammar*, 1586, (7) was largely a translation of Lily's Latin grammar. The twenty or so seventeenth century grammars were all heavily Latinate, some of them, including the one most sensitive to the requirements of English, written in Latin.

Literacy Behind the skill of getting the words and sentences right lay the skills of reading and writing. It is arguable whether literacy is part of the subject English: it is a prerequisite for any subject. However you cannot study the history of what children were first given to read (a part of 'English') without studying also how they were taught to read.

The historical study of how children were taught to read is immensely complicated by the teachers' belief, almost universal until well into the nineteenth century, that you learn to read by the same process as you learn to spell. Until at least 1700 reading and spelling were treated as the same skill. The first stage of reading was learnt from the hornbook; then you went straight into the primer or the catechism. The first so-called spelling book was Francis Clement's *The petie school with an English orthography*, 1587. (8) It is, as the full title makes clear, a compendium of what the youngest pupils needed: spelling, penmanship, arithmetic. As with many early publications which we call textbooks it is not clear how the book was to be used. Is it a book for the pupil or for the teacher ? The opening sentence, before the alphabet is introduced, reads:

"A word is an absolute and perfect voice, whereby some thing is meant and signified."

The pupils no doubt learnt this by heart. After the section on the letters and their sounds comes a section addressed to " the petie scholar", part of which begins:

"And here, little child, as I have bestowed this smal travel for thy better uptrayne and instruction: so in recompence thereof I am agayne to require of thee thy pacient and diligent attention, to this wholsome and savyng counsell,whereby I wish to persuade thee to the delite and love of learning, even now in these greene and tender yeares of thine infancie and childhoode"...[and so on for as much again]

At what stage were the pupils expected to master sentences of this complexity ? Did the pupils each have a copy of the book ? Did the master read out of the only copy ? How then did the pupils learn to read ? It is seldom admitted that we do not know how such books were used.

Literacy: spelling The teaching of literacy in the seventeenth century was supported by, but not dependent on, an increasing number of spelling books, which included easy reading matter, almost always devotional in character (prayers, psalms, graces). The skill which receives most attention in the spelling books is the division of syllables. Nearly all teachers believed that you learned to read a word by dividing it into its syllables according to a set of six or seven rules. Similarly in spelling a word: "The distinct sound of each syllable is most carefully to be attended. Therefore you must be sure to repeat every long word syllabically in your mind...before you write it down...pausing...at every syllable." [*Writing Scholar's Companion*, 1695 (9).

Comparatively few spelling books were published before 1700 (we know of about fifteen). They were too expensive for the poor. A strikingly fine one, reprinted regularly for a century and a half and available today, is Edmund Coote's *The English Schoolemaister*, 1596. (10)

Summary 1 To sum up the position of the nascent subject in 1700:

Oral expression was regularly taught through rhetoric.

Written expression was taught incidentally through translation and the preparation of declamations.

Interpretation was not taught as such but was incidental to the teaching of rhetoric and, we suppose, to some reading of anthologies.

Of the controls: grammar was taught in all schools as a distinct subject; logic was taught in only a few schools, in the upper form.

Literacy was taught in the home, in dame schools, and in the petty-schools of grammar schools.

While the term <u>English</u> was used as the name of a subject it referred only to literacy, as when Clement writes in his preface, "Now a word with the English teacher".

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Interpretation

In 1717 was published the first anthology of verse explicitly meant for schools: James Greenwood's *The virgin muse...a collection of poems from our most celebrated English poets. Designed for the use of young gentlemen and ladies, at schools...with notes, and a large index, explaining the difficult places, and all the hard words. (11)* Not only is this an anthology designed for school use: it is an anthology with notes. And Greenwood says in his preface: "I have endeavoured to make

it a compleat book for the Teaching to Read Poetry." The notes, mercifully, are very slight, mostly short explanations of classical and historical allusions.

Greenwood's anthology, though little known, is important historically. Its importance, however, should be shared with an earlier work, not an anthology but a spelling book, to which the author, S. Harland, a teacher in Norwich, attached forty pages of verse and prose (Quarles, Tillotson, Cowley, Waller, Dryden). Harland is diffident about including in a humble spelling book what he calls "abstruse matter", defending it by saying that children are influenced by what they read and should therefore be given only the best. The book had a second edition in 1714 but the date of the first edition (which has not survived) is unknown. (12)

By the 1730s a few more anthologies had appeared; by the 1750s they were more common, but in 1753 James Buchanan, master of a private school in London, complained that "Youth" had "no collection proper to improve their minds in virtuous knowledge, or make them acquainted with the English language in general". His own *The Complete English Scholar (13)* contained fables, passages from the book of Job, the psalms, papers from *The Spectator, Tatler, and Guardian,* and verse from Pope and Dryden.

By the end of the eighteenth century school anthologies were common, but there is a methodological difficulty in saying how many there were. There was a large market for home reading, especially for girls. The vast field of what is generally called "Children's literature" must contain many works which were read in school also, but until we know more about classroom practice we cannot identify them, except sometimes by price.

Vicesimus Knox There is an interesting exception to the evidence of price. In the 1780s Vicesimus Knox was headmaster of Tonbridge. His father, also Vicesimus Knox, had been headmaster before him, and his son, Thomas, was headmaster after him. For 72 years Tonbridge was ruled by a Knox. Vicesimus II produced three anthologies, which he called *Elegant Extracts,*(14) thus coining a phrase and starting a fashion. The three collections covered respectively verse, prose and letter-writing. *Elegant Epistles*, contained 1005 letters or parts of letters, Cicero and Pliny, Benjamin Franklin and Horace Walpole. The prose and verse anthologies were even larger, running to a thousand pages in the later editions, and cost fifteen shillings when the usual price of a school textbook was between one shilling and sixpence and three shillings. And these were meant for school use, not, so far as we can see from Knox's prefaces, in the library. He intended each sixth former to have his own set of the books, and for the literature to be discussed in class. The scheme was not a crank's fiasco, either. The prose and verse collections each had about twenty editions before 1825; the letters had at least ten editions; all three collections were issued also in abridged editions, which sold less well than the full editions.

During the first half of the eighteenth century between forty and fifty anthologies can be identified as for school use. By the 1770s the presentation (not, perhaps the teaching) of English literature can be taken for granted in the increasing number of private schools and academies, and, judging by Tonbridge, English literature was not ignored, even if not officially taught, in all the grammar schools.

Literacy Spelling books during most of the eighteenth century contained lists of words -- up to 10,000-- elaborately presented. The words were listed according to the number of syllables; the syllables were divided by hyphens or spaces; words of a given number of syllables were subdivided according to which syllable was stressed. The books usually contained simple reading matter, secular (fables), moralising and devotional. By the end of the century the spelling material and the reading material were being published separately, and the class reader developed early in the nineteenth century. Between 1700 and 1750 an average of between one and two new spelling books appeared every year, and popular books went into many editions and sold in large numbers: Thomas Dyche's *Guide to the English Tongue*, (15) first published in 1707, still sold 275,000 copies in the fourteen years between 1733 and 1748, an average of 17,000 a year.

Grammar was still treated as a subject on its own, with its own textbooks --- not many of them until the 1770s, when there was a startling upsurge: in 1771 alone there were seven new, separate, grammars and several more attached to dictionaries, spelling books and manuals of letter writing. During the eighteenth century grammars of English incorporated a variety of appalling exercises, mostly derived from traditional rhetoric, intended to give practice in linguistic control. The most popular, dating exactly from 1750, was the correction of 'false English' --- incorrect spelling and faulty syntax. Whole books were issued containing passages to be corrected; verse and prose anthologies were rendered into false English so as to provide literary and linguistic training simultaneously. 'Supplying the ellipses' was what we call 'filling in the blanks'; transposition exercises consisted of rearranging complex sentences (usually Milton's verse) into what was considered the 'natural' order Subject, Verb, Object. One schoolmaster in 1773 (16) published the first six books of *Paradise Lost* in this form or, as he described it, "rendered into grammatical construction".

Written expression From the middle of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth it is difficult to know how much attention is given to written expression in English. There were no manuals of composition. Our evidence comes from discussions about education in general which might apply, often, to Latin as well as to English. Joshua Oldfield, in 1707, (17) referring to both Latin and English, recommends the writing of "formed composures" (formal compositions). He offers an unusual picture of the process of composition. Its "soul and life" come from

"Moral Philosophy, or rather from Theology". The "bones and sinews" and "disposition and order" come from logic. "Reading and experience" combine to "flesh and fill it up". Grammar covers it "as with an outer skin" and rhetoric gives it "features and colour".

For most teachers until well into the nineteenth century formal compositions (themes) were required to follow one of a number of prescribed structures, such as: Introduction; proposition (the full statement of the theme); reasons in support of it; confirmation (rebuttal of contrary arguments); simile (illustrations from nature and art); example (illustrations from history); testimony (quotations in support); conclusion.

But another, less analytical, part of the rhetorical tradition was also active: the imitation of literary models. Joseph Priestley attached to his English grammar of 1761 thirty pages of "Examples of English composition" (bible, Addison, Johnson, Hume, Swift) in the hope that these examples would lead to a "just and manly taste in composition".

Oral expression Between 1750 and 1850 social and economic developments caused particular attention to be given to oral expression, especially by those to whom what we now call "upward mobility" was an aim or an achievement. The classical term elocution, which had meant 'style', was narrowed to mean the techniques of public speaking and reading aloud. Elocution was the name of a subject; textbooks of it were common. It was taught in schools, often by visiting 'professors', who also taught individual pupils in their own, or in their pupils', homes. Elocution dealt with the use of the voice, for which various notations were devised to indicate vowel sounds, pitch, volume, and emphasis. It dealt with gesture, often illustrated by drawings and diagrams of elegant pupils in elegant postures. One of its principal concerns was how to convey in voice and gesture the feelings expressed in the text. In practice most lessons in elocution were paid for by those who wished to conform with the supposedly pure speech of the educated Londoner.

This concentration on performance easily gave rise to absurdities. Charles Bland, as early as 1708, (19) had given schoolboys advice on the use of the eyebrows: "You must not raise them both at every turn...nor lift up the one, and cast down the other; but for the most part they ought to remain in the same Posture and Equality that Nature hath given them". The bad repute into which elocution fell was caused principally by the attempt to analyse the emotions -- the passions, in the current terminology. The second volume of John Walker's *The elements of elocution*, 1781, (20) contains a description of sixty passions, ilustrated by verse quotations, and advice on how to express them:

"Joy, when moderate, opens the countenance with smiles, and throws, as it were, a sunshine of delectation over the whole frame: when it is sudden and violent, it expresses itself by clapping the hands, raising the eyes towards heaven,and giving

such a spring to the body as to make it attempt to mount up as if it could fly."

Nevertheless this emphasis on performance did focus pupils' attention on the text, and especially on its tone. You cannot read aloud, or declaim, a text wwithout asking yourself what it means and what is the nature of its emotional charge.

Summary II Eighteenth century
Oral expression was specifically taught as elocution,linked to performance and, to some extent, to dramatic work.
Written expression was taught as 'composition' or 'themes', in a heavily structured form.
Verse literature was widely read; prose was read more often as a model for style than in its own right. Fiction, except perhaps for *Rasselas*, was not read in school.
The teaching of grammar was little changed, in spite of attempts to make it a better fit for English.
Literacy teaching became less dependent on doctrinal matter but was still heavilyj moralistic. The spelling book continued to be its main vehicle.

The term English, on its own, was still used only for basic reading and writing. The term English teacher is common. An 'English school' is one in which the principal teaching is what later became known as the 'English subjects', History, Geography and English. But there are signs that English is becoming the name of a subject: the 1788 prospectus for an academy in Connecticut describes its organisation into four schools. The first is an 'English school' for reading, writing and arithmentic; the third is "for classical learning, viz. Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and English critically."

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Interpretation
I referred earlier to the notes in Greenwood's anthology of 1717. Such notes are almost the only evidence we have about whether and how literature was taught. During the eighteenth century literature was certainly being presented, and read, in schools. But in what sense was it being taught ? In what sense does one teach literature ? Because our sources of evidence are almost solely textbooks we know practically nothing of what was said in the classroom about literature. With the development of public examinations during the 1850s the evidence changes. Although grammar and composition were the first to be examined literature soon followed: "Explain the following passages, giving the context in each case" (1858). Textbooks followed the examinations, textbooks with the apparatus, biographical, critical,linguistic, historical, which is still familiar.

Grammar At the same time schools were strongly influenced by the powerful reputation of German philology. Both grammars and literary textbooks discussed word history ; the history of the language (an occasional topic since early in the eighteenth century) was now taught at quite an elementary level; clause

analysis was developed on a German model.

The philological component became a political weapon. In the eyes of Oxford and Cambridge teachers, classicists to a man, English literature was not an academic subject. It did not need to be, when every educated person was familiar with Gibbon, Pope and Macaulay --- at least so long as you were careful to define an educated person as one familiar with Gibbon, Pope and Macaulay. Educationists who were pressing for the academic recognition of English as a subject used the philological component as a stiffener, a source of intellectual rigour which would make English a respectable subject like Latin. The examiners said, "You can have your literature if you pay the price in language."

The 'control' component grammar might have responded to the new philology by becoming linguistics, but the old tradition was too fixed to change so far. Some new ideas were added to the old ones, and the grammar books became larger. It is astonishing that, although English grammars were by now much like each other in contents and had been appearing in large numbers since the 1770s, new English grammars were being published at the rate of more than one a year during the whole of the nineteenth century.

Literacy
Rising population and rising opportunities for education increased the market for spelling books and elementary readers. The number of copies printed, and the rate of destruction, was vast. Some spelling books had 400 or 500 editions and sold in hundreds of thousands. William Mavor's spelling book, first published in 1802, (21) sold two million copies in its first 21 years.

The teaching of spelling was, beneficially, linked not so much with the process of learning to read as with the passages in the class reader, so that the spelling words were learnt in a context. The class reader, from the 1830s graded into a series of books according to the organisation of primary education, was the dominant influence in the linguistic and literary training of most schoolchildren.

Written expression Composition remained the most unpopular aspect of the subject. In 1775 one writer had said that the composition of themes was "always irksome to boys...because a grave, didactic, and methodical discourse is not suited to them." Another, in 1801,said that some pupils have "an almost invincible repugnance" to composition. Another teacher in 1842 explained this universal dislike by the requirement that pupils should "plunge at once into a sea of abstraction" and write on topics such as "perseverance, government, ambition, on which they cannot possibly have formed any ideas."

Summary III
I have noted what can be called the first manual of expression, the first spelling book, the first grammar, the first school

anthology. These are crude attributions, because they depend on debatable definitions. But in the same spirit one can try to give a date to the coming of age of English as a subject. Perhaps one could choose 1817, when we know that the Belfast Academical Institution had an' English'department.' But we do not know much about it. It would be better to wait until 1867, when J.W.Hales, teaching at Kings College School, London, contributed an article, 'The Teaching of English, to F.W.Farrar's *Essays on a liberal education*. Hales is here concerned almost entirely with English language, but in 1869 he wrote *Suggestions on the teaching of English*, (22) in which he treats the subject as a whole. His cautious words reflect the limitations of his position, as well as its importance: "English language and literature...may be said to be now finding places in our school curricula. That they will eventually be admitted everywhere, there seems no reason to doubt." That is splendid, but because Hales is thinking only of the major public schools he is about two hundred years out of date, as I hope I have shown.

The subject English has developed during the last four hundred years as an alliance of components. It is perhaps helpful to look on all subjects in this way. If a subject gains from fluidity amongst its components perhaps a curriculum gains from fluidity amongst its subjects.

Ian Michael
May 1994

E N G L I S H as a S U B J E C T

1. Leonard Cox The arte or crafte of rhethoryke [c.1530]
2. R.S. *Ludus ludi literarii, or schoolboys' exercises* 1672
3. Thomas Elyot *The bankette of sapience* 1539
4. Francis Meres *Palladis tamia: wit's treasury* 1598
5. Nicholas Ling *Politeuphuia: wit's commonwealth* 1597
6. Thomas Wilson *The rule of reason* 1551
7. William Bullokar *Pamphlet for grammar* 1586
8. Francis Clement *The petie schole, with an English orthographie* 1587
9. *The writing scholar's companion* 1695
10. Edmund Coote *The English schoole-maister* 1596
11. James Greenwood *The virgin muse* 1717
12. S.Harland *The English spelling book* [a.1714]
13. James Buchanan *The complete English scholar* 1753
14. Vicesimus Knox *Elegant extracts, or useful and entertaining pieces of poetry [c.1780]; ....of prose 1783; Elegant epistles 1790.*
15. Thomas Dyche *A guide to the English tongue* 1707
16. James Buchanan *The first six books of Milton's Paradise Lost rendered into grammatical construction* 1773
17. Joshua Oldfield *An essay towards the improvement of reason* 1707
18. Joseph Priestley *The rudiments of English grammar* 1761
19. Charles Bland *The art of rhetoric* 1708
20. John Walker *The elements of elocution* 1781
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